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Q&A: RUSS QUINN & LEINA KIM

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EDITOR'S NOTE

At 25 years old this year, Tagaman Triathlon is venerable indeed, the granddaddy of triathlons in the Pacific and the precursor of such events as XTERRA Saipan and Saipan Marathon. First staged in 1988, Tagaman Triathlon has become as much a part of the local sporting scene as XTERRA Saipan and Saipan Marathon and all three races are now known as the Saipan trifecta, drawing hundreds of on- and off-island participants every year. To honor this milestone, TAGA *Sport*'s Roselyn Monroyo rounded up 25 individuals who, at one time or another, were touched by the Tagaman mystique and asked them what they remember most or cherish about this event. ***See story on Page 20.***

This edition also features a rare double Q&A with 2013 NMASA Male Athlete of the Year Russ Quinn ***(page 6)*** and 2013 NMASA Female Athlete of the Year Leina Kim ***(page 16)***, both penned by TAGA *Sports* associate editor Mark Rabago. Both Quinn and Kim have been mainstays in the sports pages of our sister publication, *Saipan Tribune*, but this is Quinn's first appearance in TAGA *Sports*. The accolade these two outstanding athletes received from NMASA are well deserved and we join the rest of the sporting community in wishing them even brighter days—and more shiny hardware—ahead.

Kaisa Anderson, a Registered Dietitian, brings something new to the table with her 90/10 rule on how we should eat ***(Page 10)***. Nope, she's not being a scold and she won't advise you to starve yourself or cut some foods out completely from your dinner plate. If there's anything you should take away from her story, it's learning about "all the time" food and "sometimes" food and balancing the two. And as the chef would say, *Bon appétit!*

Our youngest contributor, Thomas Manglona II, surprises us with an inspiring story of how a police campaign to prevent drunk driving and alcohol abuse on Rota has turned out into one of the most successful community outreach effort yet in the CNMI ***(Page 18)***. Getting an entire island community to take part, gain ownership, and just be plain enthusiastic about something as mundane as a police campaign is not something you see everyday in the papers and the Rota DPS is to be commended for such a creative way of reaching out.

And for those looking for the fountain of youth, let Jim Rayphand and that twinkle in his eye be your guide ***(Page 24)***. Hush now but he says it's somewhere on Saipan. Be warned though; it's not for the faint of heart. Jumping off cliffs is never easy but the roborant waters of "East Bay" is one sure way to melt the "hideous winter" of old age (well, as Jim puts it!).

We hope you'll enjoy reading this latest edition of TAGA *Sports*. Email me at editor@saipantribune.com for comments, suggestions, and violent reactions.

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Editor

Background photo taken by Håkan Dahlström (www.flickr.com/photos/dahlstroms) and is being used under Creative Commons License.

COVER ART
Three bikers negotiate the uphill road along the former Nikko Hotel in San Roque during the 2010 Tagaman Triathlon.

Photography by
ROSELYN MONROYO

TAGA SPORTS

VOLUME 4 NO. 15
APRIL - JUNE 2014

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www.issuu.com/tagasports

TAGA *Sports*
is published quarterly by the
Saipan Tribune Inc.
with offices on the
2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road,
Garapan, Saipan
To inquire about ad rates or to place an ad, call (670) 235-2440, 235-6397
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‘East Bay’: Saipan’s Fountain of Youth.

JAMES RAYPHAND

scoreBOARD

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WRITERS’ BLOC

KAISA ANDERSON

Kaisa Anderson is a Registered Dietitian and a graduate of Utah State University. She is addicted to black bean salad and chocolate, but of course not together. She has a great love for dogs; in fact one of her life goals is to own a Golden Retriever named Chester.

THOMAS A. MANGLONA II

Thomas A. Manglona II is a Mount Carmel School sophomore, writes for the *Saipan Tribune* and *North Star,* and leads a group of students in a broadcast program called Knightly News. As you can see, this 15-year-old student has a burning passion for journalism and enjoys meeting new people, going to new places, and capturing important community moments.

ROSELYN MONROYO

A false start in the swim leg of the 2010 Tagaman Triathlon had a wave of swimmers heading into Roselyn’s direction. It was too late to get out of the way so she stood still, held her camera tight, and closed her eyes, as she waited to get knocked down by the rushing swimmers. Fortunately, she only got an early morning shower and a wet camera.

MARK RABAGO

Mark Rabago is currently looking for sponsors to finance his masters team in an upcoming 40-and-over league. He acquitted himself well in the previous masters league organized by UFO, scoring more than 30 points in a couple of games albeit in losing causes.

JIM RAYPHAND

Jim Rayphand graduated from Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia where he majored in English after nearly failing his freshman English classes. A self-proclaimed “has-been” (athlete), he aspires to be a plus-size fitness guru and a sustainable farmer of anything not requiring a green thumb.

Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA *Sports* must include the writer’s name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

THE SECRETS OF ENDURANCE ATHLETES

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

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No matter how good they are, athletes need to train and recover to be in their best form come competition time.

So how do former Saipan pro triathlete Mieko Carey, long distance runner Mamiko Oshima-Berger, and Tinian multisport athlete Joshua Manglona do this one tournament after another? Let's find out.

Carey, who participated in XTERRA Philippines and Guam in March and will be completing XTERRA Asia's Triple Crown on Saipan this month, said that nutrition plays an important role in her training and recovery.

"I remember my mother always telling me to eat a variety of food. In Japan, we eat frequently in one day, but have small meals. I can say we eat food that have at least 30 ingredients in them [in just one day]," said Carey, who will also race in Tagaman Triathlon, her fourth event in less than a month.

Though Carey believes we should take as much nutritional value as we can get from the food that we eat daily, she acknowledged that there are still some nutrients not present on our plate. In this case, energy drinks and gels, vitamins, and other athletic supplements should be considered, especially among competitive athletes.

"I take Endurox and Accel Gel from Brabu Pharmacy. I usually add amino and glutamin for muscle recovery. Accel Gel has protein and carbs that no other gel has. Protein works for muscle. It is very important for me to take recovery drink (Endurox) after training so I can train the next day," Carey said.

Oshima-Berger, who will be defending her 50K ultra marathon title in this month's Saipan Marathon, takes the same gel product.

"My husband and I like the '2nd Surge' to literally get a second wind during races. It contains 100mg caffeine. Since I am not a super young runner, what I need to focus on is recovery from each exercise/training. I take protein shakes, too, and some amino tablets after each workout," the 42-year-old runner said.

As for natural sources of vitamins and nutrients for training, recovery, and preparation the day before competition, she eats a big lunch and goes easy on dinner.

"Usually I don't eat much carbohydrates but lots of vegetables and protein. I could be a very bad junk eater so I need to discipline myself. Fortunately my husband is a very healthy eater and sometimes I just eat what he eats," the 2010 Micronesian Games double gold medalist (5K and 10K) said.

Manglona also bats for natural sources of nutrients, but admits to being a fan of Accel Gel too and the drink version of the product.

"I eat everything and prefer to use Accel gels and Accelerade sports drink for recovery," the Tinian pride said.

When he did Saipan's trifecta—Tagaman, XTERRA, and Saipan Marathon—in 2010,

Manglona's training regimen was a punishing routine of logging lots and lots of miles.

"I ran about 20 miles a week, swam about 10 miles a week, and biked about 30 miles a week. There should be very little or no alcohol when you're training," said Manglona, who became inactive in local races after going off-island to join the U.S. Army a few years back.

He returned to the local sports scene late last year when he did the Christmas Island Relay from San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi.

"For the Christmas Island Relay, I and a fellow soldier had rucking for the 13.7-mile race. Rucking is where you march and carry a rucksack on your back weighing at least 45 lbs and an extra gear, like your weapon or other equipment. I carried a 45-lb rucksack and a gear for a total of 55 lbs. I didn't specifically prepare for the ruck march, as it's part of my job as an infantryman in the U.S. Army. We travel most of the time on our feet and carry weights on our backs," the 25-year-old Manglona said.

Manglona is scheduled to compete in three events this year—Saipan Marathon, Guam International Marathon, and XTERRA Trail Running World Championships—and since he is juggling time for training, work, and family, getting enough rest is crucial to keeping a competitive form. "Remember, you are only human, not a machine where you can just replace a part."

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Athlete of the Year: Russ Quinn

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

For certified beach volleyball nut Russ Quinn, his taking home the 2013 Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association Male Athlete of the Year award is a sort of lifetime achievement award.

The 49-year-old former national beach volleyball player has seen it all. He has won in the islands' longest-running tournament, the Marianas Cup; represented the CNMI in many off-island events for beach volleyball; and in the past decade took up two new sports, cycling and triathlon, which he has become quite adept at.

Quinn has also made the successful transition to coaching, which has seen him at the helm of several national teams, imparting his many years of beach volleyball experience to the islands' up-and-coming spikers.

Officially, the Marianas Eye Institute CEO took last year's NMASA Male Athlete of the Year plum after his amazing comeback from hip replacement injury that saw him successfully tackle the 2013 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle Race.

TAGA *Sports* caught up with the Will Farrell lookalike and asked him about his NMASA victory, his injury woes, and how advancing age should never be a deterrent to enjoying sports.

What's your initial reaction after finding out you won NMASA Athlete of the Year?

My initial reaction was shock. I am an older sportsman that has enjoyed being active my whole life. To be honored with this award, at my age, was a pleasant surprise. It hopefully will be an encouragement to other athletes to continue to be active no matter how old you are. I always tell people that say "I'm too old now" that it is only a number and you can enjoy many years of competitive sports. Don't use age as an excuse.

What do you think tilted NMASA members' hands in your favor?

I am not sure as to why I was selected over the other worthy candidates. I can only guess that I struck a cord with some of those voting. I have recently had both my hips replaced (last one was done in April 2013). I then raced in the Hell of the Marianas less than eight months after surgery and posted a sub 4-hour ride. I am guessing that that impressed people and hopefully inspires them to achieve goals they didn't think they could do. I also think that my continued involvement in coaching beach volleyball has kept me on people's radar.

Who are you dedicating the award to?

I dedicate this award to God and my wife, Kanae. To God because He gave me strength

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to overcome my injuries and He is the ultimate Athlete of the Year. And to Kanae because she has always supported my sporting endeavors. She also did a great job in organizing this past Hell of the Marianas, too.

What would you rather be known for in sports—a volleyball player or a triathlete?

My true passion has been beach volleyball. I started getting into endurance sports like running, biking, and swimming as a way to cross train. As I participated in these events I enjoyed them and pushed myself to improve. The CNMI has so many sporting events that I was able to keep my fitness level up as I prepared for the next race or competition. When I started to have hip issues, my focus became biking as it was non-impact and helped me maintain my weight/fitness. I started to improve and became a pretty good technical rider.

When did you arrive on Saipan and how did you get involved in local sports?

I arrived on Saipan in 1992. I met several influential people that introduced me to the sporting scene. Bill and Jean Sakovich were very involved in local sports and I worked with Bill on a couple of events. As I became more involved, I met many others that raised their hands to help develop sports in the CNMI. I continue to be inspired by others giving their time to sports. Laurie Peterka of the NMIVA [Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association] is someone that inspires me to continue passing the sporting torch forward.

What's your most memorable sports moment on island?

When I won the Marianas Cup volleyball tournament in 1996/1997. The Marianas Cup is the pinnacle of beach volleyball here and to win it validated my ability to rise to the occasion. Of course it didn't hurt to have a legendary partner like Tyce Mister. We played against tough Japanese and local competition and my play was at a high level. I was in the zone that weekend and just seemed to know where to be and able to put the ball down at critical times of the tournament. I was on cloud nine for a week.

How much did your hip problem play into your sort of semi-retirement in the local sports scene?

I first noticed something was wrong in 2005. I had this nagging groin injury that wouldn't go away. After resting and trying to get back into sports for a year with no improvement, I went to CHC and they found that I had osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease that was only going to get worse and ultimately end in hip replacement. That was not good news, as I was only 40 at the time and I felt I was too young to have that procedure and still be active. Over time it became worse and I tried to manage it through Advil and other over-the-counter drugs, but it got to the point were I couldn't put on a pair of socks or tie my shoes. Running was out of the question. Volleyball was painful and I couldn't move around the court.

Now that you're healthy, what are your plans, sports-wise, in the next five or so years?

I am going to enjoy being pain free. I am slowly starting to get back to some of the sports I used to enjoy. And while I am pretty competitive, I realize that at 49 years old my best days may be behind me. I do plan on competing in local events and occasionally overseas. I now listen to my body and try to not overdo it. I do hope to get back into Adventure Racing. This is an endurance race with teams of four that use several disciplines (mountain biking, kayaking, trekking, orienteering, and other sports) to get through a preset race course. It is very fun.

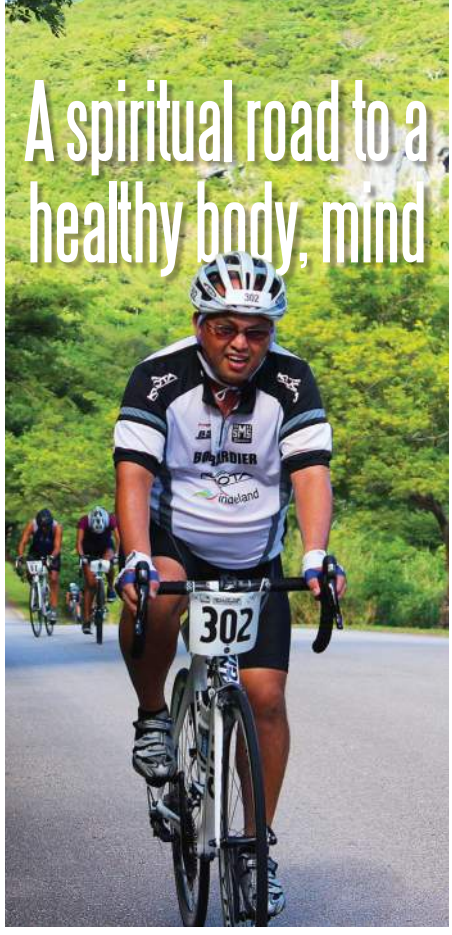
Any advice to people on island just starting to be active in sports?

My advice to anyone thinking about getting into a new sport or coming back to a sport they used to do is—go for it! You are never as young as you are right now. Now is the time to do it. The CNMI offers so many options: outrigger paddling, golf, triathlons, softball, swimming... just to name a few. It is a great place to be active. Being active gives you a better quality of life. Never let anyone tell you "you are too old" as age is just a number.

What makes Saipan a great place to have an active lifestyle and be involved in outdoor sports?

The CNMI is an awesome sports haven. The weather is nice year-round. It is like an endless summer here. You don't have to bundle up in the winter or hibernate. It is an active community too. I see people biking, windsurfing, walking the beach path. It makes me happy seeing people being active. Now excuse me, I need to get outside and play!

A spiritual road to a healthy body, mind



THOMAS MANGLONA II
Contributing Writer

As a child growing up in the Philippines Fr. Ryan Jimenez had very little opportunities to participate in organized sports that children enjoy today. There was no volleyball, soccer, or baseball. Instead, children climbed trees and played hide-and-seek in the jungle.

Despite this, Jimenez always found ways to stay active. While completing his theological studies at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California—a period that he whimsically calls "back in the '90s"—he got bit by the tennis bug. After countless hours of studying within the walls of the seminary, he would immediately head to the college's tennis court.

"Tennis is a way of expressing my competitive side," he said. "It helped me build my character. At times I felt like giving up but I was determined not to do so and kept at it."

The discipline paid off. Soon after returning to Saipan in 2003 and being ordained a priest, he squeezed into his hectic schedule once-a-week tennis lessons that led to several medals in local tournaments. More recently, he was crowned a runner-up in the 40-and-above singles category in a Tan Holdings-sponsored tournament.

He also shares a profound passion for biking. He was actually forced into the sport by a friend who said it would improve his tennis game, but he eventually fell in love with it.

Jimenez joined his first "Hell of the Marianas" bike race in 2011 in a group that earned the third place in their category. He hit the road with his bike again the next year in 2012 and improved his time. He was at it again last year, this time in a two-person team. "It was the first time I did a 50K bike ride."

Jimenez plans to participate in the "Hell of the Marianas" again this year in order to reach his ultimate goal—biking a full 100K—something he had hoped to have completed the year before.

"My friends continue to challenge me and they said that they won't believe me until they see me do it," he smiled.

As a priest, Jimenez fervently believes that physical activity is just as important as spiritual health is.

"I do this because I need to take care of myself. I also need the time to be out on the island and soak in God's grandeur made manifest in His creation. I recently went biking with some friends during a full moon. It was great! There were no cars, we had the road to ourselves, and we had natural lighting from above."

In 2005, Jimenez was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. He said being proactive in sports has helped him fight the uphill battle for his health.

He expressed hope for the youth and even adults on Saipan to take advantage of what the island has to offer: beautiful oceans, peaceful sidewalks, and green jungles.

"It is all for free. We should all go out there and walk, run, bike, play tennis, swim, and have fun. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We should take care of it."

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THE RULE OF 90/10

KAISA ANDERSON, RD
Contributing Writer

Getting together for parties or gatherings is common here in the CNMI, and they are always a good time. I have had great opportunities to meet new people and eat great food while living here. The most common question I am asked is what brought me to the island. And this is where the conversation always takes a turn. Once my new acquaintance finds out I am a dietitian, panic and shame fill their eyes as they try to hide what foods sit on their plate. Soon after, a lengthy run on sentence of excuses and apologies come as my new friend explains their choices on their plate.

Well, I am here to tell you that there is nothing to be ashamed of, and the food on your plate is something you should enjoy! Yes, I said enjoy!

However, don't get me wrong, I said you can enjoy those foods, but I didn't say all the time.

There was a principle I was taught from one of my instructors while in college called the 90/10 rule. What this means is that 90 percent of what you eat are foods that are good for you, I like to call them "all the time" foods. The other 10 percent of what you eat is what some may say "free" calories. I like to call these your "sometimes" foods.

Most get stuck in the belief that when on a diet, they have to cut foods out completely. Foods that they love and enjoy. This is absolutely not the case. We need to fill our diets with foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals but lower in calories, allow ourselves a variety of good foods, and keep our bodies hydrated.

If you are not sure what you should eat all the time, here are some foods that fall into your 90 percent of your total diet.

ALMONDS: These crunchy snacks are high in polysaturated fats and monosaturat-

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2014 SPORTS CALENDAR

APRIL

XTERRA Saipan Championship: This off-road triathlon competition set for April 5 brings some of the best pros in the world to the island and is the last stop in XTERRA Asia's Triple Crown after the Philippines and Guam.

Tagaman Triathlon: This is the CNMI's very own road triathlon race and this year's competition is a special one, as the event is celebrating its 25th year. It will be held on April 12 or just a week after pros and local triathletes are still recovering from the grueling XTERRA race.

Saipan Marathon: This event set for April 19 completes Saipan's Trifecta fo this month. It will feature over 700 runners racing in the 10K, half marathon, marathon, and ultra marathon (50K).

CNMI Junior Tennis Championships: This is the season-ending tournament for the Commonwealth's junior tennis players. Players earn points from this event and those that will top the ranking list (based on points from various tournaments) will earn slots on the CNMI Team that will compete in the 2014 North Pacific Regional Championships.

MAY

McDonald's/PSS All Schools Athletics Championships: This tournament will run from May 8 to 10 and will have elementary, junior high, and high schools students competing in running, throwing, and jumping events.

MISO Girls Fast-pitch Softball and Boys Soccer League: The CNMI's private and public high schools compete for supremacy in fast-pitch softball and soccer at the Oleai Sports Complex.

NMIFA Youth Football Festival: This event will culminate the spring season of Northern Mariana Islands Football Association's competitions in the U8, U10, U12, U15, and U18 age groups

May Masters Bowling Tournament: The CNMI's top bowlers compete in three classes and expected to draw a tough challenge from some Guam players.

JUNE

North Pacific Regional Championships: This tennis tournament will have the favored CNMI players battling Guam, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia for slots on the North Pacific Team that will compete in the Pacific Oceania Junior Championships in Fiji.

CNMI District Tournament: Saipan, Rota, and Tinian's teams in the Big, Senior, Junior, and Little League fight for the right to represent the Commonwealth to the Asia Pacific Regional Championships.

Annual Silver Streak Run: Held in honor of DFS' Tom Picarro, this race will bring runners from DFS to Oleai and back.

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Valencia oranges grow in a citrus grove.

ed fats which help lower "bad" cholesterol. Almonds also have a good source of protein that can curb your appetite. The Nurses Health Study found that people who ate nuts are thinner on average than those who almost never eat nuts.

LEAFY GREENS: These rich colored vegetables are good at producing nitric oxide from the nitrates in the plant. Sounds confusing? Well, these nitric oxides may play a role in prevention of heart disease and high blood pressure.

FISH: Fish is a good source of protein and is low in saturated fat. Saturated fats should be limited in your daily diet, making fish a great option. Fatty fish have omega-3s which may reduce high blood pressure. The American Heart Association recommends eating fish two times per week. This cuts our unhealthy fats from other sources of fatty pork or beef, which is overall good for your heart.

CITRUS FRUITS: Oranges, Pomelos, Tangerines, and Grapefruit are all citrus fruits high in Vitamin C. Vitamin C has an important role in maintaining healthy skin, muscles tendons, bone, and your smile—teeth and gums.

COCONUT: Coconut water is a great electrolyte replacer. So instead of sports drinks or after a hard workout, drink some coconut water. It's lower in calories and a great way to hydrate your body!

BEANS: Beans are really the magical "fruit." They are high in fiber, low in fat, and a great protein source. Studies have shown

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Black beans

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Blueberries ready to eat.

the consumption of beans to lower your cholesterol 20 points. Amazing!

EGG WHITES: This was always my favorite part of the egg as a kid, and little did I know it was high in protein and low in fat and calories. Foods that are a good source of protein but cut out unhealthy fats are optimal for heart health.

OATS: This breakfast whole grain is a good source of fiber. It allows for good digestion, and also contains beta glucans, a molecule that may help boost our body's immune system and protects us bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

BLUEBERRIES: Blueberries are one of many foods that contain a high amount of antioxidants. Studies done with antioxidants have found they may help prevent against cancer.

PUMPKIN: This vegetable is a triple act. It is not only a good source of fiber and Vitamin C, but also Vitamin A. Vitamin A is what helps regenerate your cells and helps you see at night.

If you can follow the 90 percent "all the time foods" rule at gathering and parties, you can eat guilt free. Just make sure the party foods only make up 10 percent of your total food you eat that day. Isn't that great to know? It is a matter of watching what your portions are and not about cutting out foods.

So the next time I see you at a party, enjoy your food, but include those vegetables and low in fat favorites too! Happy eating!

Click-It or Ticket

National Seat Belt Enforcement Mobilization

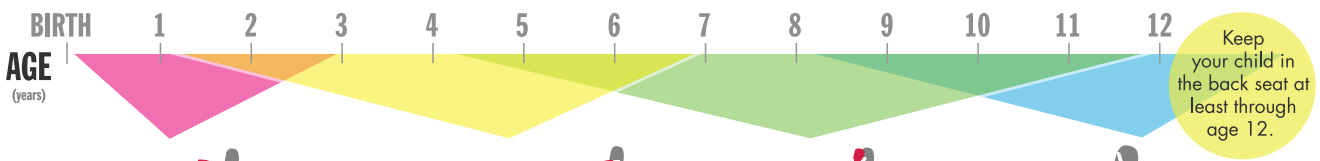
May 12 - 26, 2014

CLICK IT OR TICKET DAY & NIGHT

NHTSA
www.nhtsa.gov

Car Seat Recommendations for Children

- Select a car seat based on your child's age and size, and choose a seat that fits in your vehicle and use it every time.
- Always refer to your specific car seat manufacturer's instructions; read the vehicle owner's manual on how to install the car seat using the seat belt or LATCH system; and check height and weight limits.
- To maximize safety, keep your child in the car seat for as long as possible, as long as the child fits within the manufacturer's height and weight requirements.
- Keep your child in the back seat at least through age 12.



REAR-FACING CAR SEAT

Your child under age 1 should always ride in a rear-facing car seat. There are different types of rear-facing car seats: Infant-only seats can only be used rear-facing. Convertible and 3-in-1 car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time.

FORWARD-FACING CAR SEAT

Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. It's the best way to keep him or her safe. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, your child is ready to travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.

BOOSTER SEAT

Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until he or she reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by your car seat's manufacturer. Once your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with a harness, it's time to travel in a booster seat, but still in the back seat.

SEATBELT

Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. For a seat belt to fit properly the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest and not cross the neck or face. Remember: your child should still ride in the back seat because it's safer there.

DESCRIPTION (RESTRAINT TYPE)

A **REAR-FACING CAR SEAT** is the best seat for your young child to use. It has a harness and in a crash, cradles and moves with your child to reduce the stress to the child's fragile neck and spinal cord.

A **FORWARD-FACING CAR SEAT** has a harness and tether that limits your child's forward movement during a crash.

A **BOOSTER SEAT** positions the seat belt so that it fits properly over the stronger parts of your child's body.

A **SEAT BELT** should lie across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest to restrain the child safely in a crash. It should not rest on the stomach area or across the neck.

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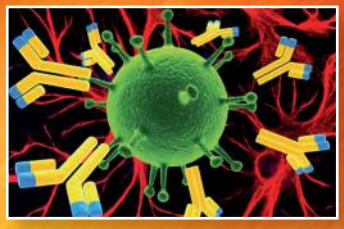
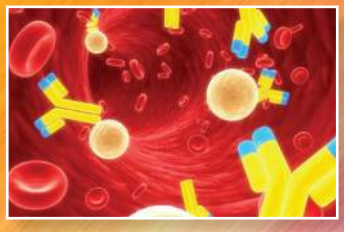


Child develops antibodies which act like little soldiers waiting for diseases to enter the body.



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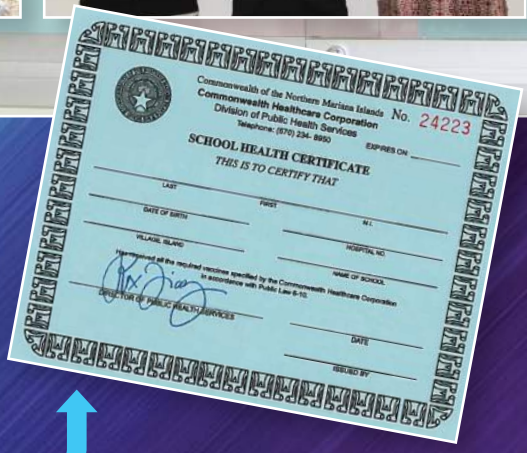
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DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
C.N.M.I.
HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Athlete of the Year: Leina Kim

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

The child prodigy has indeed grown up and is fulfilling the promise her dad envisioned for her when he started bringing the now Colorado State University-Pueblo golf standout Leina Kim to the links.

The Northern Marianas Amateur Sports Association finally recognized the Calvary Christian Academy alumnus in February for her outstanding first year at CSU, which competes in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference in NCAA Division II, after bestowing her its 2013 Female Athlete of the Year plum.

For the record, the 21-year-old golfer bagged both the Rookie and Golfer of the Year awards in the RMAC and was the lone player in the division to reach the Regional Championships.

Kim, who recorded several first place finishes last season and made record scores in team and individual categories, returned to Saipan during breaks in school to compete in the Tournament of Champions where she nailed her fourth straight Ladies Flight title and sixth overall.

TAGA *Sports* emailed Kim on what she feels about the well-deserved NMASA award and also quizzed her about what she expects in her second year at CSU and her plans for the future.

What's your initial reaction after learning you won NMASA Female Athlete of the Year?

I was excited and very honored! I went on Facebook and saw pictures of my mom receiving the award for me.

To whom are you dedicating this award?

All dedications are to my dad. He taught me everything I needed to know about the game of golf and I am finally playing the game my way. Without his coaching, I wouldn't be where I am today.

How bittersweet was it that you were not here to receive the award?

It's a little upsetting that I wasn't there personally to receive the award, but my mom was my proxy and I'm sure she was just as happy and honored to receive it for me.

What improvements have you made from your first year of college golf to your second?

I'm still in the process of improving. I learned so much from watching other girls play during regionals and nationals. Those experiences made me think about how I still have a few years to keep on improving. But if I could name one thing that I improved on, it is my confidence. You have to be confident with your swing. If you aren't, then you're just going to doubt yourself and you won't play the way you want to play the game.

How are you handling the pressure in your second year, knowing that you did well in your first year?

There is a lot of pressure. People assume you will top every tournament and you really don't want to let anyone down. I believe in myself. I trust my swing and I trust that I can keep my game up. The pressure is there but I have to keep my cool and just hit one shot a time.

How does it feel to be a scholar athlete in the mainland?

Being a scholar athlete puts a lot of pressure on you. People have higher expectations but I like the challenge and the pressure because it helps you become a better athlete. You grow with the challenge.

What's the biggest adjustment you had to make from high school on Saipan to college in Colorado?

One huge adjustment is the weather. Spring golf is one of the most challenging experiences of my golf career so far. You never know if it's going to be warm or if it's going to snow. You play with schools in the West Coast that were able to practice throughout winter, and here we are struggling to catch the golf course on a semi-nice day.

What are your plans after college? Do you plan on going to Q school and turning pro?

Honestly, I still have a couple more years left and I have no idea what my plan is. My coaches are training me to be one of the top players in the nation but I'm still 21 and haven't figured out what I want to do after graduating from college.

What to do you miss most about Saipan?

I miss my family most definitely. I also miss the scenery and the beaches.

Any advice to aspiring golfers in the CNMI?

Keep your head in the game. Never doubt yourself. See it, trust it, feel it. Find your routine and stick to it.

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3D Sports on Rota

THOMAS MANGLONA II
Contributing Writer

Back in 2007 the people of Rota, both young and old, only had one official sport's season throughout the entire year—baseball.

That was when the local Department of Public Safety and Division of Youth Services decided to launch the "3D Sports Tournament"—a veiled anti-drunk driving and anti-alcohol abuse program that also hopes to promote healthy living and teach the youth teamwork and leadership skills.

"We decided to go through a community-oriented route in order to get our message across," said Traffic Section Commander Police Sgt. Jarrod Manglona.

Rota's DPS and DYS officers, in collaboration with the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, first conducted an islandwide survey to find out what types of programs would interest the community the most and would most deter them from engaging in alcohol abuse and drunk driving. The responses they received included dancing, volleyball, and basketball.

That quickly led to the creation of what is now known on the island as the "3D season."

According to Manglona, the season commences in October and lasts until early January of the next year. The season is kicked off with a Trick or Treat Station at DPS during Halloween. There, promotion/awareness shirts, mugs, caps, books, and other treats are given away to local residents.

"We also pass out educational pamphlets and brochures on alcohol abuse and drunk driving," he said.

A candlelight vigil in remembrance of those in the southern island's community who've lost their lives to drunk driving occurs in November just before Thanksgiving. Parents and their children gather by the beach for the event and light lanterns and send them off into the sky or afloat in the waters after a short procession around Songsong Village.

In December, the sports tournament begin simultaneously with the Rota Municipal Council's baseball Little and Senior leagues. Volleyball and basketball teams compete against each other throughout the day.

At night, the organization's "Take it to the Streets" dance competition takes place. Youth groups form their own dance teams and are expected to create original dances to certain themes every week, ranging from line dancing to cultural performances. Like its name suggests, the groups actually perform their dance numbers and compete against each other on the island's roadways, in highly populated community locations.

"This event ["Take it to the Streets"] was by far a community favorite as it showcased the island's love of dance," Manglona said.

The event draws much attention as the winner is determined through both fan-votes and the total score given by the event's judges.

The feedback from the community, Manglona said, has been overwhelming. The biggest indication of the program's effectiveness is a substantial crime rate decline. He said that he never dreamed the program would be such a success and impact the community. With so many activities under the program's belt, Manglona said that plans for more activities are already in the making.

One Rota youth said that because of the program, it has motivated her and her friends to be more productive in school and at home.

"It is a great program. Every after school or on the weekends, many of my friends go out to practice or play," Shannon Barcinas said. "I know many of the island's youth enjoy the program and play or simply enjoy just having something to do on the island in which most people think that there is not many things to do. I don't think I would have found something that I enjoy doing such as playing volleyball if it weren't for 3D sports."

More tournaments are expected to be held during summer and local teams will be flying to Saipan and Tinian to go against the islands' top sports steams. Flag football and soccer is also in the future for the 3D sports tournament. The "Take It to the Streets" dance competition will also continue to grow and community members have already asked to expand the competition to include the island's version of the singing competition "The Voice."

Manglona said his best advice for youth and adults who want to get into sports would be to "go out there and have fun with whatever sport you want to get involved in. Don't let anyone or anything get in the way of you going out there."

Manglona shared that he tells his own children and the students he coaches to live by the motto "Be better than you were yesterday," followed by "Limitations are meant to be shattered."

Manglona and others law enforcement officials on Rota bring joy and happiness to the island's youth but take drugs and alcohol abuse very seriously, with a passion.

"It is my biggest belief that if I or one of my staff can spend enough time with the people we serve and spread our message, then we can make a difference in our community," he said.

Manglona hopes that one day the program can end drunk driving and alcohol abuse—something he said is an accepted practice in the community and a "social norm."

"If we can make a difference in one life and pass on the knowledge we give them and it continues on, then I believe that the program has met its goal."

Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

MAY 2014

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25 for 25

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

25 perspectives as Tagaman Triathlon marks 25 years this year

Long before XTERRA Saipan, Saipan Marathon, and other competitions took place here to promote the CNMI as a sports tourism haven, Tagaman Triathlon has been luring a steady field of on- and off-island participants.

First held in 1988, the event is named after Taga, a legendary king of ancient Chamorros known for his tremendous strength. Stories claimed that he could move huge latte stones, called taga, with ease.

Bill Sakovich, one of the prime movers of the Tagaman Triathlon, said he, then-Marianas Visitors Bureau executive director J.M. Guerrero, DFS' Wolf Mojica, and Pacific Development, Inc.'s Yoichi Matsumura agreed to name the event after the legendary king since the sport is a game of strength.

The first race, which drew over 200 participants, took off at the lagoon in front of the Hafadai Beach Hotel. The bike leg brought riders to as far as the airport and back to Hafadai Beach Hotel, while the run part was from the starting line and up to the Saipan Diamond Hotel (now Saipan World Resort), with the finish at the American Memorial Park.

Hawaii's Reuben Chappins won the inaugural race, beating Japan's Hideya Miyazuka, who later became a familiar face in the event and won the competition three times (1991, 1992, and 1998). The Tagaman Triathlon went on to enjoy a huge following for a decade or so with the biggest turnout (361) recorded in 1992.

Tagaman attracted participants from around the world, aspiring local triathletes, and even individuals with handicaps (a sexagenarian blind man and a youth with Down syndrome) and brought together tireless volunteers and supportive private companies and government agencies.

This year is the 25th staging of one of the longest-running triathlon events in the Pacific. To celebrate that milestone, TAGA *Sports* got in touch with 25 people who had been or are still part of Tagaman and let them share their thoughts and experiences.

Pedro B. Camacho heads to the swim-bike transition area during the Tagaman Triathlon held in the early 90s.

"I trained for several months, swimming on the beach, running along Beach Road, and riding an ordinary bike. On race day, the pros and other off-island athletes wore special suits and have great bikes, while we're in Speedos. It was a jungle out there in the swim race, people going on top of you and kicking and holding you down. If you're not careful and a good swimmer, you may drown. I survived because I was in shape and really trained hard." **Pedro B. Camacho**, one of the first few locals to complete Tagaman, from Saipan

"A year will not be complete without a visit to Saipan for Tagaman. I enjoyed every minute of my visit since 2005. This is where I spent a major part of my life and I love to see everyone keep the event running. I truly enjoy seeing people return for Tagaman, but we also need new ones." **Bill Sakovich**, co-founder and race director, Hawaii

"Since my retirement from MVB in 1990, I put up JM & Associates to provide the administrative, coordination, and arrangements for Taga, Inc., the association that was established to hold Tagaman. We take care of the registration. So far, we hear nothing but good comments on the experience of our off-island participants, especially about the race coordination and hospitality of our local people." **J.M. Guerrero**, co-founder, Saipan

"I trained hard almost every day from Monday to Saturday. I woke up early in the morning at 3am and trained until 7am. I watched my diet and took no alcoholic drink. Lastly, I dropped my weight down to 160 lbs. During the competition, my biggest challenges were heat and dehydration. I conquered them all. It was a big motivation to represent Rota in Tagaman and race with the pros." **Staff Sgt. Ed Barcinas**, 3-time Tagaman participant, Hawaii

"I would guess I've done close to 20 Tagaman. Wow! That's a lot of miles. I guess a moment that sticks out is one race several years ago when I could see Dr. Stephan Samoyloff gaining on me on the run. We had a friendly but competitive challenge with one another and I remember I had a sigh of relief on the last run turn around because I had kept the distance." **Tyce Mister**, MHS teacher, from Saipan

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Governor

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MISSION

It is the mission of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to increase employment and promote independence among eligible individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

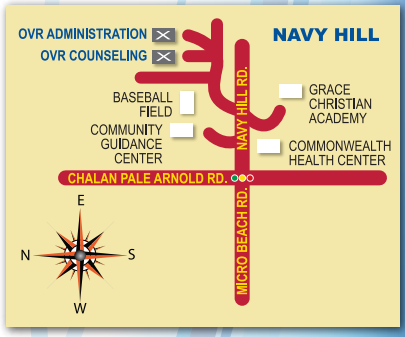
ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

An applicant is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if the individual:

A. Is an individual with a disability; and,
B. Has a physical or mental impairment which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services; and
C. Requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, or retain employment; and
D. Has legal status to allow employment in the CNMI or the United States.

ORIENTATION

Orientations are every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. Appointments must be made by calling Magdalene (Maggie) P. Reyes at 322-6537/38.



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"One of the most memorable Tagaman races for me happened four or five years ago. I forget what year exactly, but I remember having three broken ribs during the XTERRA Saipan and then a week after I joined Tagaman and still finished in the Top 5. I love the Tagaman bike course because there are good hills." **Mieko Carey**, pro triathlete, from Guam

"I missed volunteering for Tagaman only once. I was a volunteer in the swim leg in the first race in 1988 before becoming the bike-run transition supervisor in the next 23 editions. I was once knocked over by a small Japanese woman, as I tried to slow her down. I stayed down, as I looked at her first to see if she was okay. She was fine and hurriedly started to run." **Bobby Winkfield**, transition area supervisor for 24 years, from Saipan

"I lived on Saipan from 1992-2000, so I probably did Tagaman around seven or eight times. I think I was usually happy with my finishes, except for one year when my bike brakes were rubbing my tire and I couldn't figure out why my bike was going so slow." **Nicole Forelli**, top Saipan finisher in 1993, from Hawaii

"Tagaman was always my suffer fest, not only because of the hot weather, but also because of the course. The run on the road after the 2K swim and the 60K windy road ride is brutal, even if I tried to acclimate as longer as possible. I am not a road triathlete so the most painful part to me is always passing pretty much the finish line on the way back and to keep running for the lap at the AMP for an extra 2K or so before finishing the 16K flat run." **Renata Bucher**, pro triathlete, from Switzerland

"I did my first Tagaman Triathlon as a solo competitor in 1994. As an employee of PIC, I helped volunteer for the aid station and I was intrigued by what I saw and decided to try it. It was a difficult feat, but I managed to get through the event with a smile on my face and I was hooked. I used triathlon as a way to stay fit for my true passion, beach volleyball. I found that training for triathlons helps me stay stronger and in better shape for volleyball." **Russ Quinn**, CNMI coach, from Saipan

"My first and only Tagaman experience was in 1988. During my training, I borrowed a tragically slow 10-speed bike from a friend, Brent Thompson. Then Bill [Sakovich] was able to get me a bike to use for the race. The only real thing I knew about biking at the time was not to crash. But like most triathletes, I had the swimming thing down. Running was my favorite part of the race. My swim start was the final wave, my best showing. Looking back, I can't believe I finished 34th (first out of the water) out of the over 200 participants." **Mike Villagomez**, former Saipan Swim Club coach, from Arizona

"The first year [1999] was so unique. To fly into an island you had previously never heard of, then to be treated like someone special by some of the friendliest people I have ever met, will always be special. In terms of competition, it was always good. Some world-class triathletes and some very good amateurs were always in attendance. I was responsible for bringing some high quality Australian athletes during these years [1999 to 2005]." **Scotty Penny**, bike shop owner, from Queensland, Australia

"In 2008, I interviewed Team Manatee, featuring Jim Arenovski, John Jones, and Michael Stewart, who finished the race with one shoe. He didn't know where his other shoe was. When asked what they had learned from this experience, the reply was 'we need a bigger ice chest.' That was for XTERRA, so for the Tagaman the following week, Team Manatee dumped Stewart and replaced him with the more articulate Steve Nutting, who managed to finish the race with both of his shoes on." **Bob Coldeen**, KSPN news director, from Saipan

"I joined the race from 1998 to 2003. I like all of it. The swim was very warm and there were lots to see. The cycle course was very scenic (although it's hard to appreciate that when you're racing). The run is usually my best discipline so the hard, hot 15K run suits me. When I did Tagaman, it was always hot, which means hydration strategies and pacing are very important." **Stephen Farrell**, North Harbour Triathlon Club coach, from Auckland, New Zealand

"I competed in Tagaman first in 1992 and did not finish. I last competed in 2004. Over the years, I won four times, came second three times, and third once or twice. This was one of my favorite events in the world, so much so that I would visit the island often for training camps and would always encourage my friends to compete. I still keep in touch with friends I met on the island, such as Nicky Nichols and Ty Izuka. I loved the friendly atmosphere, the island, the course, everything, from waiting in the water until Bill could see the first tank, struggling with the heat on the run, and the post-race parties. If it were not for a family illness, I would have been on the start line again this year." **Mike Trees**, world aquathon champion, from the United Kingdom

"I love the fun and friendly atmosphere of the island, particularly the party, food, and beer afterwards. Where else in the world can you have a beach barbecue with everyone the day after the race?" **Rieko Takayasu-Trees**, three-time Japanese participant, from United Kingdom

"We have been hosting pros since 2012. In 2012, Kimiko had decided not to race but we still wanted to feel like part of the event and our previous housemate had just moved off island, freeing up a bedroom. Since that year, we have had Ben Allen and Jacqui Slack stay with us. They have opted to stay with us despite winning free stays at PIC, because they prefer the connection to the community, plus I think Ben really likes playing with our dog. They have many great stories and successes to share, but remain down to earth people. We have introduced them to some of our favorite local restaurants, parks, social activities, and entertainment along the way. We treated them like a family, not as guests.**" Steve and Kimiko McKagan**, homestay hosts, from Saipan

"I started watching Tagaman in 1997. One time, Dawn Hammermeister and I decided to run along the course so we could see everyone. We ended up in the paper, even though we weren't participants and weren't wearing numbers. I also recall one year watching a visiting triathlete approach the finish line and I could tell he didn't look well as he was stumbling so I yelled for medical personnel. A nurse or doctor approached him but they couldn't touch or assist him or he would be disqualified. Then within feet of the finish line he collapsed and wasn't able to finish and he would have been one of the top finishers. It was so sad to see. The heat had obviously taken its toll on him.**" Suzy Kindel**, long-time spectator, from Saipan

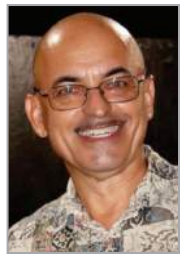
"I raced in Tagaman from 1999 to 2004. The hardest parts of the course were waking up at 0-dark-thirty to get to PIC and swimming in the dark. It was also hard to run because it would get so hot and you could see how far ahead or behind your rivals were at the turnaround.**" Stephan Samoyloff**, medical director, Ironman Canada, from Penticton, Canada

"I've been helping Tagaman bikers since 2004. I and other bikers not joining the race usually go around the bike course to check participants who need help. We don't choose who to help and don't charge fees for replacing tires or tubes. I even failed to get tools I loaned to some bikers or let off-island participants use bikes from my shop for free. It's my way of encouraging athletes to join Saipan races. I am happy to help.**" Romy Lanuza**, Saipan Bike Pro owner, from Saipan

"My first Tagaman was in 2006. I did the run leg as part of former police commissioner Ed Camacho's team that year. It was by chance that Ed and I met the night before the race when he asked if I could fill in for then-governor Juan N. Babauta. Nicole Calvo was our swimmer. It was after that race that I promised myself I would do Tagaman solo the next year. Each year I want to do better and faster. The swim has been my Achilles heel, but that just drives me more and more to do it each year and overcome that weakness. The pressure and pre-race jitters never go away, you just become more familiar with it,**" Lewie Tenorio**, nine-time participant, from Guam

"I started doing the times for Tagaman in 2003. The most unique race I have ever been part of was the one held in the middle of the Amazon jungle in Brazil. Athletes swam the Amazon River that has crocodiles and piranhas and biked and ran in the jungle with jaguars and pythons. However, Tagaman is always on the top of the list of events that I enjoy timing because it has incredible support from the community. Athletes can feel this very special treatment from the community.**" Jim Lovell**, JTL Timing owner, from Hawaii

"I will always remember the second edition of Tagaman Triathlon. We had Hirotaka Sugimoto, who was 69 years old then and blind. He did the entire race, while tied to his helper.**" Wolf Mojica**, co-founder, Taga, Inc. president, from Saipan



"I was a spectator when Tagaman started, but was inspired to do the race two years later when I saw a blind man tethered to a friend in the swim and run and riding a two-seated bike. I trained for six months about five times a week, alternating most days with long swims in the Marpi pool, bike rides and 5K to 10K runs. The 1.5K swim seemed to take forever, as well as the bike section but the beginning of the run was the most difficult to adjust to after riding so long. I raced for two years before joining the American Red Cross aid station and still volunteers because I love the event and enjoy the camaraderie with the organizers and racers. I hope we can continue this marquee event, which can only be achieved with strong community participation and support,**" Jerry Facey**, former participant and long-time volunteer, from Saipan

"Tagaman Triathlon is one of the oldest annual signature events of the Northern Mariana Islands. It's an event that regional and international triathletes have come to count on and look forward to each year, and it has attracted thousands of visitors, both competitors and their travel companions. Its success over the last 25 years has helped birth many other annual signature events, such as XTERRA Saipan, the Saipan Marathon, and more. In combination with consecutive weekends of XTERRA Saipan Championship and the Saipan Marathon, the Tagaman provides a 1-2-3 punch of sporting events that off-island competitors find attractive. It's worth it to travel far distances and at significant expense in order to compete in not just one but two or three events. While we would certainly like to see more competitors in Tagaman, there have been groups of steady followers throughout the years that have kept the triathlon going strong.**" Martin Duenas**, MVA Community Projects Manager, from Saipan

'EAST BAY'

Saipan's Fountain of Youth

JIM RAYPHAND
Contributing Writer

If age is just a number and we are only as old as we let ourselves feel, then I'd say we can call off the enduring search for the famed fountain of youth. At first drop into the magical, blue waters of East Bay (a little known secret—most of us would rather keep it that way—for Saipan's cliff-jumping and open-ocean swimming enthusiasts), the "hideous winter" of old age melts into the springtime of youth. Suddenly, all of the lingering aches, pains and general worries of an adult world are set adrift and forgotten, at least for that moment and that place in time. Between the exhilaration of free-falling into untamed waters and the liberation of floating weightless in an otherwise heavy world, even the

oldest among us begin to feel and act like kids again. It is quite something to see a bunch of grey-haired, old men frolicking with giddy excitement as they claw their way up the sides of cliffs, only to jump right back in with child-like screeches and pretend super-hero actions…something reminiscent of a scene from the classic '80s movie, *Cocoon*.

Such is the experience of time at Saipan's East Bay, a natural cliff line of rocks ranging in height from as low as 8 feet from sea level (depending on the tide) to a staggering 60 or more feet with straight drops off the edge into a wide open ocean. It's not necessarily for the weak at heart, with inherent dangers both in and out of the water. Nonetheless, a few of us old-timers find ourselves drawn back to it day after day basking in the adrenaline of our younger years, feeling younger with each jump and stronger with every new level we conquer. Somehow, we always walk away feeling accomplished, knowing full well that we did nothing but play, chasing our youth like a dog after his tail. If ever there was an enchanted forest, ours is the place of enchanted waters.

It's been said of the fountain of youth: "People are more intrigued by the story of looking and not finding than they are by the idea that the fountain might be out there somewhere." To which I'd say, I am more intrigued at the thought that maybe the long-sought after mythical waters are a mere few minutes away from my home today or that the magic of youth really is just a state of mind.

It's also been said that "People who perceive themselves as old are more likely to quit activities which could help keep them young. …Key examples [of such activities] include socializing and exercising regularly." In other words, "If people think that they are old and frail, they will act like they're old and frail." Let's hope that's true, such that if we think we are young and strong, we will act like we're young and strong. As Mark Twain said, "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it does not matter."

Perhaps East Bay is not for everyone—truth be told, I hope not too many others will discover it—but given the chance for a dip in this beautiful place, my best advice is to…jump. My 9-year-old nephew does it all the time.

JUMPING HEIGHT OPTIONS

***Disclaimer:** There are no lifeguards and there is no guarantee of safety (much of which depends on the tide, the currents, and an individual's ability and strength in swimming). Our experiences of jumping are all taken at our own risk, knowing that rescue and/or emergency management personnel are not likely able to reach the site in any time less than 45 minutes to an hour, if they can even find the spot at all. Also, jumping surfaces (except for the 14 and 18 feet levels) are not artificial platforms, but rather natural surfaces off the jagged rock cliff lines.

1st Option: 8 feet from jumping surface to the top of water.
2nd Option: 14 feet from jumping surface to the top of water.
3rd Option: 18 feet from jumping surface to the top of water.
4th Option: 35 feet from jumping surface to the top of water.
5th Option: 41 feet from jumping surface to the top of water; and
6th Option: Approximately 60 feet from jumping surface to the top of the water (writer has yet to make this jump due to concerns of being too heavy and of dying upon impact).

Nothing's over the hill for this master athlete

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

I first met Arnold in early 2001. I just recently arrived on island and spent my lunch breaks playing 3-on-3 hoops at the NMC Gym.

Arnold was one of the old guards in pick-up basketball. He came to play with his patented Converse Chuck Taylors and short shorts.

Everything about his game was old school. He shoots only high percentage shots, played honest defense, and always hit the open man.

One of the most unforgettable games I played on Saipan was with him as teammate. We had bull-strong center Ray Roberto manning the block and me and Arnold playing the perimeter. The result? We blanked our opponents, which included national coach Rufino Aguon—something like 20-0.

Not everybody knows that before he became one of the most visible referees in the CNMI, Arnold Mesa was a star basketball player in neighboring Guam in the 1970s.

The 55-year-old suited up for the varsity basketball teams of Agat Elementary School, Agat Junior High, and George Washington High School.

Mesa was introduced to sports and an active lifestyle at an early age. Born to parents Joaquin and Encha in 1959, he was a good swimmer even before he dribbled a basketball.

With the guidance of John Kinsela, older brother of Grace Christian Ministry's head pastor Rey, Mesa also excelled in baseball and volleyball.

It was undeniable, however, that the 5'7" forward's first love was basketball. Mesa said he set the record for averaging the most points—over 40—in a basketball tournament in Guam that included teams from Anderson Air Force Base.

When asked what his most memorable game was, Mesa has a quick answer—the high school basketball championship game against John F. Kennedy High School in 1971.

With only two seconds left on the clock, Mesa and George Washington were down by a point. Luckily one of his teammates was sent to the 15-foot stripe for a chance to tie the game or win it outright.

"My teammate Lou Cohen was up for a free throw attempt on the old 1-for-1 rule, which means you must make the first free throw to get a second."

Mesa said that since Cohen was a bad percentage free throw shooter, he prepared himself for an offensive rebound and a quick put-back. He, however, did more than that.

"My jump did coincide with Lou's miss and I was able to grab the basketball with my two hands and instinctively slammed the ball into the ring for a surprising slam dunk. The clock expired and our team, George Washington, began celebrating the miraculous win."

Unfortunately for Mesa and George Washington, one of the referees called a technical foul on Mesa for dunking the ball and nullified his basket, handing the game and the championship to JFK High School

The loss may have been heartbreaking for Mesa but the last two seconds of the match made him a local legend in Guam hoops, so much so that everybody in the U.S. territory who knew basketball at the time began calling him Dr. AJ—an obvious take on Julius "Dr. J" Erving.

After high school, Mesa was offered a full basketball scholarship at the University of Guam. He, however, didn't take it because he started a young family.

While covering the sports beat, I had the chance to watch my old teammate suit up for the old Masters Basketball League in the mid-2000s. Arnold saw action for such teams like Ol'Aces, CK Legends, and the Y Team. While he never won a championship in the masters, Arnold was there in every game and played basketball the right way.

Not everybody knows that Mesa is also quite involved in the World Masters Games, an international multisport event held every four years.

"I've been joining the [World] Masters Games the past 18 years and collected over 30 medals as Guam had designated me to play, coach, and referee all age groups. The last Masters Games I went to was in 2010 in Sydney."

Even though the World Masters Games are for "older" athletes, there's nothing over the hill when it comes to the schedule of the competition.

"I play at 8am, coach at 11am, then officiate again at 2pm and 4pm. They usually give me three games to officiate a day. They keep telling me that I'm sharp with my calls and that's why I got to officiate so many games. I guess coming from Saipan where a lot of players tend to complain has made me a good referee."

Mesa said the biggest problem when it comes to basketball in the CNMI is a player's character on the court and their tendency to complain too much about the officiating.

"The CNMI will never get a gold medal [in basketball] until they change their character on the court and stop complaining. Players are to blame and not the coach. I actually salute Rufino (national coach Aguon). Guam has a program and that's why it medals all the time. Only baseball in the CNMI has a program. You're a program if you medal in off-island games like the Micronesian Games. Even if Jericho Cruz (a college player in the Philippines who grew up on Saipan) plays for the CNMI, it still will never be enough to bring home a gold medal unless they change."

Mesa said he would like to serve as national coach of the CNMI Men' Basketball Team at some point but the Basketball Association of the Northern Mariana Islands hasn't asked him to.

"They don't like me because they think I'm from Guam. But my mom is actually from Rota and I have roots here. They never asked me to coach."

Fast forward to 2013, when I began to play masters basketball again, one of the people who constantly eggs me to continue playing was Arnold, now a veteran referee. Although he has ditched the high tops and short shorts for the zebra stripes and basketball low cuts, he is as fit as ever and is obviously better-conditioned running up and down the court. Arnold attributes his overall good health to abstaining from alcohol and cigarettes.

Not everybody knows but Mesa was adrift at sea for four days in 1990 that tested his faith but ultimately brought him closer to God.

"There were three of us on the 14-footer. It was meant for diving but we went out to test the new engine and it conked out. The strong current took us close to the Philippines."

While they saw boats the first three days, they were too small and the waves too big for them to get noticed, Mesa said.

"We didn't have anything to eat, no food or water. The two guys already told me to tell their mother and father that they love them. We were already in our life jackets as the boat was already sinking as water was already filling the boat."

Aside from the water filling the boat and eventually capsizing it, another threat were the dozens of sharks now circling the boat with Mesa and his companions on it.

"The sharks were bigger than my boat. We took out all the fish and the smell of blood was everywhere and it probably attracted the sharks. We threw the fish out because the water was coming in and in five minutes the water was already infested with sharks."

Luckily for Mesa and company, a boat from Merizo finally found them on the fourth day. They were already 25 miles off Guam.

From that point on, Mesa made a pact with God to be the best man he could be and as a basketball lifer he vowed to impart to the youth what he learned from the sport whenever he could.

It probably was one of the reasons he took up officiating basketball games as a hobby. On the side, he conducts basketball clinics now and then for the benefit of up-and-coming players.

PETER LOYOLA

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Peter Loyola now lives and works in New York but he still reminisces about the seven-plus years he spent on Saipan, where he won tennis tournaments, represented the islands in regional competitions, made lifelong friends, and even got to have one final hurrah competing in motocross.

Loyola currently works as a tennis pro and pro shop manager in Brewster, New York. Before that, he worked in Japan as a tennis instructor.

The common denominator in both careers is they are a direct result of Loyola becoming a member of the U.S.-based Professional Tennis Registry in 2007 while living on Saipan.

Three years later, in 2010, the former collegiate varsity player at San Beda College in Manila, Philippines, received a professional certification from PTR, joining the company of more than 14,000 teaching pros from 122 countries in Asia, Europe, and the U.S.

Humble beginnings

Becoming a U.S. licensed professional tennis instructor was the farthest from Loyola's mind when he arrived on Saipan way back in 2004.

Some 10 years ago, Loyola was brought to Saipan to work for Triple J. He would work for the company on weekdays and help train Saipan riders on the rudiments of motocross on weekends.

For fun he would indulge in his lifelong love of tennis at the American Memorial Park where he quickly made friends.

Before long, the fleet-of-foot and tireless tennis-lifer would enter local tournaments and win a bunch of them.

Until now, he counts his unofficial grand slam in the 2006 Pacific Islands Club Tennis Tournament and his stint in the gold-winning CNMI national tennis team in the 2010 Micronesian Games as the most memorable of his career.

"Winning the 2006 PIC all open events—men's singles open, men's doubles open (with Faheem Ebrahim), and mix open doubles champion (with Cleofe Santos)—and the 2010 Micronesian Games, where I got three medals in singles, doubles, and team event, are still up there as far as my achievements in tennis count."

Loyola also found success in his career when in 2006 he began his stint as the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan tennis pro. It was a position he held until leaving Saipan for Japan in 2011.

"I left Saipan on Aug. 1, 2011, after I got a job offer from Hilton Shinjuku Hotel in Tokyo as a tennis pro. I worked there for two years and then I moved to TTC in Kashiwa Chiba, Japan. It was a big tennis club with 1,000 members and 14 tennis courts. The owner is a former Wimbledon women's doubles champion. In fact, one of the club's prominent members is Paralympic gold medalist and grand slam champion Shingo Kunieda as well as some Japanese Davis Cup players and ITF Junior players."

Two-sport athlete

Loyola said he got his start in tennis when he was 11 years old. It helped that his house in Taytay, Rizal, was a mere 10 minutes away from a tennis court.

"Many of my relatives are tennis players and some of our national players in the Philippines during that time practiced and played in our club."

His prowess with the tennis racquet didn't go unnoticed and led to a college scholarship at San Beda College where he played for the school's varsity for two years.

After college, Loyola worked for PCI Bank (now Banco de Oro) while also suiting up for the company's tennis team.

It was then that Loyola found a second love in motocross.

"Growing up motocross was very popular and most of the top riders in the Philippines came from our town so I dreamed that one day I will ride and race motocross, too."

After trying banking for three years, Loyola resigned and entered the national motocross circuit with the Shell-Yamaha team for a year and raced for the Mobil-Honda team for the rest of his entire motocross career.

His short but checkered motocross career saw him represent the Philippines in the Asian Mountainbike race in Thailand in 2000 and a handful of other international events.

Second home

Loyola said he will never forget the more than seven years he lived on Saipan, which he considers his second home. He also said that the tennis friends and family he cultivated on the island are some of the "nicest and most awesome" people he had the privilege to meet.

Loyola has these nuggets of wisdom to impart for people on Saipan who are thinking of taking up tennis.

"For new tennis enthusiasts whether they're 6 or 66 years old… just make sure you have the proper gear for safety reasons, especially the right sneakers and right size of tennis racquet. Tennis is a lifetime sport. Make sure you play it with respect to other people's level of play and opinion. Try to avoid arguments if possible and just have fun while learning more of the game."

2013 TSL FOUNDATION/NMASA STUDENT ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

- **Name:** Carol Lee
- **Age:** 11
- **School:** Garapan Elementary School
- **2013 Achievements:** Champion in the U12 singles and doubles events in the North Pacific Regional Championships and Pacific Oceania Junior Championships; Member of the elite Junior ITF Pacific Oceania Touring Team to Australia

- **Name:** Kensuke Kimura
- **Age:** 17
- **School:** Grace Christian Academy
- **2013 Achievements:** 2-time NMASA Student Athlete of the Month; Broke CNMI national and age records in tournaments in Guam and Australia; Represented the CNMI to the 15th FINA World Championships in Barcelona, Spain

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